CHAPTER THREE: IDENTITY CRISIS

In this chapter, we would see how Eliot exposes the plight of children who are in search of an identity in patriarchal homes that have a limited vision towards life. Alongside the central masculine/feminine binary that runs in every patriarchal home, Eliot looks into the two types of femininity that girls are categorized as. For certain, there are labels of 'good' and 'bad' femininity that girls are doomed to. This results in these girls having to experience an impoverished childhood.

Eliot questions the male definition of 'good' and 'bad' femininity. Tang states that:

> 'If patriarchy has constructed "femininity" – if it has constructed Mary and Eve, the Madonna and the whore, the positive feminine qualities of nurturance, compassion, and gentleness and the negative feminine qualities of pettiness, jealousy, and vanity – then there is good reason for women to reject everything for which these labels stand for'.
> (Tang 1989 p.104)

Eliot too rejects the social norms that project such values in women. She believes that such labeling that starts from young is harmful to a girl's ego. A patriarchal home that regards children as mini adults and groom them along the lines of masculinity and femininity do not take into consideration their individual traits. The further split of femininity between 'good' and 'bad' femininity undermines the self-esteem of the girls and leaves them in a state of not knowing their

By examining the child characters in The Mill on the Floss, we see a state of tension between siblings and adults as the children become aware of the emergence of their individual needs. Eliot hopes that in case of a rebellious child, parents who are emotionally secure would be able to identify their needs and help them acknowledge and resolve primitive emotions such as rage and vengeance. In the characterization of Maggie, we see the emergence of individuality in a child that begins with the knowledge that the world is wide and it offers challenges, changes and fulfillment for one who is daring enough to explore the various fields of hopes, fears and excitements. There is bound to be rivalry between members of the family when these challenges are not met. This leads to feelings of dejection and loneliness in the child and a search for identification with those who are outside the family circle.

A child such as Maggie who is marginalized for her differences has to rebel against the 'mechanism of repression' (Psiomiades 1992 p.37) that makes it possible for patriarchy to suppress certain characteristics in a female child in order to make femininity sufficiently different from masculinity. This is necessary to make women to behave in a certain way in order to make them moral guardians of the household. The suppression of certain qualities such as rage and sexuality in a female is to ensure that the patriarchal order is not threatened.

It is vital to know that George Eliot develops both courage and independence in the character of Maggie and at the same time she had instilled a sense of family loyalty in her. In so doing, Eliot tries to establishes femininity in its own right and attempts to detach it from its 'dependence on the male' (Ruskin 1991 p 93). Thus, we see Maggie frequently defying instructions and at the same time seeking love and attention from her family members especially from her brother. Despite

Tom's cruel name-calling such as 'stupid' (411), 'donkey' (403) and 'Miss Spitfire"(458), Maggie continuously fights for her rights. Through her rage, Maggie defies the existence of gender ideology that gives to femininity a double nature. Thus, Maggie constantly battles against the two extremes of 'good' (St. Ogg – the saviour) and 'bad' (witch and demon) femininity in her desire to find her own individuality.

Tom's identity has been laid down by the fact that he would be 'growing up opening an oyster' (749) and he himself had vowed to apply himself with all his strength and vengeance in recovering the family's lost fortunes. However, Maggie's identity is likened to a river. This image is to show that Maggie has no idea where her destiny would take her. Her family members have decided that her 'superficial cleverness' would bring her nowhere. Through the portrayal of Maggie, Eliot shows the unpleasant nature of the male to dominate a patriarchal household and keep the women from recognizing the sense of identity in them. Initially, In The Mill on the Floss, we see Maggie's identity blended with those whom she lives with. She is portrayed as Tom's tomboyish sister, Mrs. Tulliver's wild daughter, Mr.Tulliver's 'little wench' (MF 455) and Lucy Deane's 'strong-willed' (735) cousin. Though Maggie has great devotion for her father and a kind of idolized love for her brother, she could feel a growing sense of resentment towards them for they could not see that she is very much different from the many girls they know in their neighborhood. In Maggie's case, the author never allows her heroine to seek a sense of individuality for she believes that she is both intellectuality and morally superior to Mr. and Mrs. Tulliver and her brother Tom. Thus, we see Maggie in the image of a non-conforming self, staying true to her beliefs though at times she wanes in her efforts.

Eliot makes us realize that children are "struggling erring creatures" who cannot be rigidly brought up by stiff patriarchal laws. Maggie aches in being placed between masculine control and feminine resistance. Eliot quotes in Letters III:

> ' the only effect I ardently long to produce by my writings,
> is that those who read them should be able to imagine and
> to feel the pains and the joys of those who differ.....' (111)

Those who differ in a patriarchal home resist labels such as 'masculinity' and 'femininity' that are reinforced in their social conditioning during early childhood. Klein believes that to a certain extent gender formation is defined by biology but reinforcement by adults is detrimental to a child's mental health. This could lead to a sense of insecurity and low inferior complex in a child. The acute anxiety experienced by the child does not help in the child's struggle to relate to other people and to find an identity out of them.

John Bowlby in his book Attachment and Loss (1969) recognizes the fact that a sense of appreciation and secure attachments in a family allow a child to trust her parents and siblings and this gives the child a better sense of efficacy and self worth to explore the social world. When the child lacks this security, she tends to be either shy or withdrawn, or defy authority and social norms since a child, after all, is 'a social creature' (39). A child, according to Bowlby, goes through a long course of development before it takes its individual place in the adult world. As the child grows, it undergoes a lot of anxiety pangs as it adjusts to its individual needs and the needs of the family. If the adjustments fall short of standard behavior set by family members, the child would feel a sense of anger, guilt, shame and embarrassment that would stifle the sense of individuality in

the child. Maggie's intense needs and conflicting desires are harsh realities of growing up and Eliot is serious that 'we should not pooh-pooh the grieves of our children'. (MF 441)

The character of Maggie, especially cannot be 'pooh-poohed' since it is 'essentially identical with the young Mary Ann Evans' (F R Lewis 1964 p.39). George Eliot was forty years old when she created the figure, Maggie Tulliver in The Mill on the Floss. Through the creation of Maggie, Eliot highlights the development of intelligence in the midst of a "narrow oppressive society" (466). It is this mature intelligence that makes Maggie and Eppie, too, in Silas Marner far greater figures than Tom who simply chooses to ignore his talents and refuses to recognize the strength of character and self-worth in others.

We have to first examine the relationship of Tom and Maggie and connect it to her experience of joy and pain to show how different she is from her brother and other Victorian kids. Luce Irigaray in her paper Speculum of the Other Woman (1985) posits that children of both sexes go through early childhood in the same manner with slight notions of their biological differences. The little girl shows no more aggression as the little boy does. However, the little girl passes from masculinity to femininity upon social conditioning. The little girl who had up till the time she was told that she must be different from the boy lived exactly like the little boy. Thus, Eliot's reference to 'daisied fields' where Tom and Maggie played in unison while infants. To become 'a normal woman' (48) the little girl has to suffer a more painful transition and a more complex evolution and after the gradual process, she will be regarded weaker and given a lesser share of power. This is a valuable insight because it highlights the impact of gender binaries present in a society.

The childhood scenes in the beginning of The Mill on the Floss show the negative impacts of such binaries. There are not many records of happy times between the sister and brother. The actual moments of togetherness are brief because Tom is always harsh towards Maggie. This gives rise to resentment in Maggie that results in vengeance and rebellion. We find Maggie forgetting to feed Tom's rabbits, knocking over his cards and spilling his wine. Later, in her adolescence, Maggie forms a secret friendship with Philip Wakem with the full knowledge that such a liaison would meet Tom's disapproval. In the later part of her adolescence, Maggie falls in love with Stephen Guest knowing well that she would revoke Tom's anger and this time of Lucy's too.

However, Maggie's attitude towards mistakes is to forgive the person who errs. When Tom finds his rabbits dead, he angrily retorts, "I don't love you". But Maggie replies, "I'd forgive you, if you forgot anything - I wouldn't mind what you did - I'd forgive you and love you" (417). This is the kind of unconditional love that Eliot envisions through the child figure, Maggie. According to Maggie (and Eliot, too) love should not be earned through favours done. In this respect, Maggie is morally superior than Tom for it is her belief that it is not up to her to judge or punish a person for his or her behaviour.

But no one in her household recognizes this superiority of mind that holds the knowledge that love transcends over gender and family honour. The tensions remain throughout Tom and Maggie's childhood. In one childhood episode, Tom laughs at Maggie when she cuts her hair. Maggie feels that if it had been Tom in a disastrous situation and 'if he had been crying on the floor, Maggie would have cried too.' (MF 423). To prove that Maggie is true to her words, the narrator describes Maggie as screaming when Tom hurts himself with a sword. Later, Mr. Stelling

finds 'both children . . . on the floor - Tom is a faint and Maggie crying beside him' (528). This goes to show that in times of disaster, gender typologies lose out and then, love is appreciated. The same scene is played out later in their adolescence. During the flood scene Tom and Maggie cling together. The image of a crying Tom speaks volumes of the fragility of masculinity myth. Men break down in times of hardship because they have not been taught to handle their emotions well. Maggie scoffs at masculinity by stating: 'When anything hurt you very much, it was quite permissible to cry out . . . and it was cruel of people not to bear it'(530).

According to Monroe A Bruch in Shyness and Social Interaction men are taught socially to be less expressive in their thoughts and feelings. Thus, boys grow up holding traditional beliefs to play up their masculine roles to cover their weaknesses. They are made to cover up any traits that are considered feminine. They are also taught to hold back their tears and cover any feelings that are considered as cowardice. The only emotions considered brave for men are that of anger and aggression. The narrator describes Tom's agitation when he sees grown-ups quarrelling. His concept of a good quarrel is one that 'could soon be put an end to by a fair stand-up fight with an adversary whom he had every chance of thrashing' (MF 508). Having this belief of his superior physical strength and an omnipotent control over his household, Tom is unable to experience the world in anything other than in narrow paternity terms. Children, for example Tom, who develop without the capacity to experience genuine concern for others may continue to live within an arid confinement dominated by feelings of love and hate, good and bad and powerful and powerlessness.

In contrast to Tom, Maggie is very expressive of her feelings. She throws up tantrums, cries a lot and is bold in voicing out her views. An intelligent soul such as Maggie, could analyze people and their actions at an early age. She felt that 'everybody in the world seemed so hard and unkind' (MF 569) to her. She found 'no indulgence, no fondness such as she imagined when she fashioned the world afresh in her own thoughts'. (569) Maggie could compare the people in her life and the fictitious characters in her books who 'were always agreeable or tender, and delighted to do things that made one happy, and who did not show their kindness by finding fault. The world outside the books was not a happy one, Maggie felt: it seemed to be a world where people behaved the best to those they did not pretend to love, and that did not belong to them. And if life had no love in it, what else was there for Maggie? Nothing but poverty of her narrow griefs and her father's . . . childish dependence' (569).

Maggie was ' a creature full of eager, passionate longings for all that was beautiful and glad; thirst for knowledge; with an ear streaming after dreamy music . . . with a blind, unconscious yearning for something that would link together the wonderful impressions of this mysterious life, and give her soul a sense of home in it'. (569) But in a situation where there is lack of love, where the parents are immersed in their own troubles, the child moves to day-dreaming. Maggie occupies herself with books and a high sense of imagination takes her to a fantasy world where she is loved and accepted.

Though Maggie is upset with the narrow-minded perceptions pertaining to her parents and brother, she loves her brother at all cost as Marian Evans had loved her brother Isaac. Eliot's

brother too had alienated her for living a life different from the females of her time. But the need to be noticed and loved was in Eliot throughout her life.

Her husband, John Cross, spoke of her 'absolute need of someone who should be all in all to her, and to whom she should be all in all' (15).

Cross states:

> 'Nearly everyone who knew George Elliot and wrote about her agreed that she was a woman with a longing for love beyond the average and that in spite of her strength of mind and character she was not fitted to stand alone" (15)

This need to be loved and to return love was not satisfied in Eliot's family. Mary Ann's adoration for her brother was not appreciated from young. Upon her announcement of her relationship with George Henry Lewes, her first husband, she was ostracized by her brother. Her utmost loss of familiar faces and a sense of isolation come through in the character of Maggie Tulliver. This image is used by the author to drive the point that a blissful relationship with family members has been sacrificed because of irreconcilable differences.

In their adolescence, Maggie points out to her brother when he retorts that he has 'no confidence' (685) in her and that she 'would be led away to do anything' (685):

> 'Why will you say that, Tom? It is very hard of you. Have I not done and borne everything as well as I could? And I kept my word to you . . . My life has not been a happy one, any more than yours'. (MF 685)

Tom retaliates:

> 'Now listen to me Maggie. I'll tell you what I mean.
> You're always in extremes - you have no judgement
> and self-command; and yet you think you know best,
> and will not submit to be guided. . . . You might have
> lived respectably amongst your relations, until I
> could have provided a home for you with my mother.
> And that is what I would like to do. I wished my sister
> to be a lady, and I would always have taken care of you,
> as my father desired, until you were well married. But
> your ideas and mine never accord. . . '. (MF 686)

Maggie argues:

> ' I know you would do a great deal for me: I know how you work,
> and don't spare yourself. I'm grateful to you. But indeed,
> you can't judge for me - our natures are very different. You
> don't know how differently things affect me from what they
> do you.' (MF 686)

The above confrontation between siblings shows the oppressive nature and limited vision of the opposite sex. In declaring his obligations to take care of his mother and sister, Tom is merely mimicking Mr. Tulliver's narrow existence. In the portrayal of her child figures, Eliot shows her displeasure over the existing education system that causes children to be limited in their mental growth. Such an education inhibits the creativity of the young and makes them ill-equipped to face the future. In The Mill on The Floss, the boy, Tom labours under Latin and Arithmetics, and when he is ready to embark on a career, he remarks, "It's such a nuisance and bother – I've been at school all this while learning Latin and things – not a bit good to me – and now my uncle says, I must set about learning book-keeping and calculation and these things. He seems to make out I'm good for nothing" (MF 568). Eliot regards education as 'a delicate and difficult business' (MF 519). Tom, then, is a symbol of a faulty education. In the portrayal of Tom's education, Eliot

remembers her own personal dissatisfaction of the type of education that she had gone through that had not given her confidence to publish her novels by using her real name. She had to veil herself by using a masculine name and she never stopped using it even after her true identity was revealed.

Education should help a person in gaining confidence of one's potentials. But family members must be supportive of a person's pursuits in life. By charting out Maggie's needs, Eliot hopes to highlight the fact that a shared vision for a better life can only be achieved if both sexes show tender feelings of love and sympathy towards each other. In fact, the need for love is said to be 'the strongest need in poor Maggie's nature' (MF 419). But Maggie is constantly at the mercy of Mrs. Tulliver and Tom during her growing up days.

Bruch states that, a person who is constantly at odds with a 'critical, rejecting person' (237) will be in a state of despair. For many children, a teddy bear, a blanket or other seemingly meaningless item from home can pacify their feelings of despondency (Winnicott: 1953:34). But in Maggie's case, she clings to her brother even more. There is a very disturbing image presented in the union between brother and sister when Maggie clings to Tom when he accuses her of being greedy although she had submitted to Tom's rigid but fair procedure of sharing the puffs. Maggie cries and Tom kisses her, saying, "Don't cry, then Maggie - here, bite a bit o' cake"(MF 420). Here, there is a strong imagery of the boy being perceived as all powerful and the source of wisdom and righteousness. Whereas, the girl is weak, simple-minded and childlike, incapable of individual thought. Tom refuses to recognize power- sharing as an act of fairness that could make his sister happy.

According to Freud (1869), love and food are closely related. A child loses self-esteem when she loses love as related to an infant who depends on food for its well being and further loves the mother who gives nourishment. Maggie eats the puff to show her need to gain her brother's love. She chooses the lesser half of the puff because she wants his approval. The narrator sympathetically points out that 'I fear she cared less that Tom should enjoy the utmost possible amount of puff, that he should be pleased with her for giving him the best bit'. (MF 420)

The determination to survive and maintain a good relationship with those whom we regard as more powerful than ourselves is one of the major characteristics of childhood. A child learns to make concessions but if that child has to make too many, the denial of its own potentials will leave a severe sense of loss. Maggie's state of passivity each time Tom becomes aggressive alarms the readers. While fishing, Maggie participates in Tom's superiority for the sake of gaining her brother's approval. The whole scene is passive as Maggie looks 'dreamily at the glassy water' (420), listens to 'dreamy silences' (421) and gentle sounds of the water. Maggie allows Tom to open the basket, prepare the tackle, throw out the line, put the rod in her hands and tell her when to pull. The portrayal of Maggie here may be symbolic of what Winnicott terms as 'false self'. This child whose 'potential aliveness and creativity has gone unnoticed' (1987 p. 88) may painfully withdraw from active participation of the world.

The time of togetherness between Tom and Maggie is pervaded by a mood of passivity and female subjugation. Bernard Paris in his book The Inner Conflicts of Maggie Tulliver (1965) notes that Maggie's passivity and idleness link unconsciously to the memory of the womb where Maggie sees Tom as a mother substitute. In fact, the round pool where Tom and Maggie fish, 'that

wonderful pool, which the floods had made a long while ago: no one knew how deep it was; and it was mysterious, too, that it should be almost a perfect round' (MF 422) symbolises the womb of the mother. But the rage that builds up in Maggie when she sees her brother running off with Tom Jakins reinstates her earlier rebellious feeling against him. The narrator sympathetically describes Maggie:

> 'She rebelled against her lot, she fainted under its loneliness,
> and fits even of anger and hatred - towards her father and
> mother who were so unlike what she would have them to be
> - towards Tom, who checked her, and met her thought
> or feeling always by some thwarting difference
> - would flow out over her affections and conscience
> like a lava stream, and frighten her with a sense
> that it was not difficult for her to become a demon'. (MF 608)

Gilbert and Gubar (1979) explains that the repressed rage of nineteenth- century females writers were worked out 'by projecting their rebellious impulses . . . into mad or monstrous women'(77) and by doing so 'female authors dramatize their own self-division, their desire both to accept the structures of patriarchal society and to reject them' (78). In Eliot's case, I do not believe that she wished to follow the rigid laws of patriarchal times for she broke almost every one of them in her need to do the right thing according to her conscience. But she would have wanted her family who belong within the patriarchal order to understand her and accept her just the same. Maggie is portrayed an enraged girl not because she wished to subconsciously accept patriarchy but because she wanted patriarchy to accept her for who she was. Eliot also laments the fact that women were deprived of the choice to live in harmony within their family circle just because they choose not to be dictated by patriarchy.

We have to remember that Eliot, too was ostracized for her brave and independent decisions by her family. Analysts believe that some famous people create a false self and live within it if from young if they feel that they cannot relate to their parents and siblings. In Eliot's case, she retreats into the intellect and becomes a workaholic amidst her depressive mood swings to keep alive another identity. This is the author's unconscious effort to take on an identity from something outside her real self as a substitute to her lonely self. Her masculine pen-name suggests a need to live, work and to be recognized as men are recognized for their attributes. And she was willing to live in this sense of identity even though her true identity was revealed right after the publication of The Mill on the Floss.

In her creation of Maggie, she does not allow the character to remain in this false sense of self. Maggie's hair, which was always a cause for contention, is cut off to rebel against Mrs. Tulliver's attempt to make her more feminine. Maggie does not wish to be recognized for her neatness and docility but more for her sense of individuality. The short hair unconsciously narrows the difference between femininity and masculinity for now Maggie would look more like her brother. By looking more masculine, Paris notes that Maggie subconsciously seeks her mother's love and approval. Paris, however, explains that Maggie knew deep within her that Tom would always be Mrs. Tulliver's favourite child. Maggie, too could never be another Mrs. Tulliver. Paris states:

> Mrs. Tulliver gets her sense of worth and of orientation in the world through her conformity to the ways and values of the Dodson clan. Maggie's deviations from the Dodson ideal fill her with anxiety, and she is deeply ashamed of her daughter. Mrs Tulliver's displeasure manifests itself in a habitual deprication of Maggie, and her daughter's self-esteem wilts under her ceaseless criticisms. (Paris 1965 p.173)

Mrs Tulliver's emotions are inadequate to support an independently bold child as Maggie. Mrs. Tulliver is controlled more by customs than strong human bonds. As Mrs Glegg points out to Mrs Tulliver:

> 'It drives me past patience to hear you all talking o' best things,
> and buying in this, that, and the other, such as silver and chany.
> You must bring your mind to your circumstances, Bessy,
> and not be thinking o' silver and chany, but whether you
> shall get so much as a flock of bed to lie on,and a blanket
> to cover you, and a stool to sit on. (MF 645)

Maggie knows that there are far greater things in life than material goods.

In expressing her identity, Maggie 'threw some exaggeration and willfulness, some pride and impetuosity' (MF 487) and by being excessive she demanded the right to be acknowledged as an equal partner in the Tulliver's household. Maggie 'loved Tom very dearly, but she often wished that he cared more about her loving him' (550). To combat Tom's harshness, Maggie develops a 'tenderness for deformed things' (559). The narrator explains that Maggie 'preferred the wry-necked lambs, because it seemed to her the lambs which were quite strong and well made wouldn't mind so much about being petted; they would think it very delightful to be petted by her! (600). Unable to acquire her mother's tenderness and having failed to identify with Tom, Maggie grows up seeking love from Philip Wakem, her father's enemy. The narrator informs us that despite Maggie's 'experience under family criticism' (550), she finds a certain 'sensitiveness in Philip that matches with her own keen sensitiveness (600). Maggie spends much time with Philip in her childhood because of Philip 's "affectionate admiring look ... to the certainly that Philip would care to hear everything she said, which no else cared for (600).

Philip and Tom represent two vastly divided spheres of masculinity. Philip's world is made up of a more feminine and private artistic nature whereas Tom belongs to the very masculine sphere of aggression. Tom Tulliver's aggressive behaviour' and 'desire for mastery over the inferior animals' (MF461) makes him an eligible member of the partriachal society. As a contrast to Tom, Philip is kind and humane. Philip is a vehicle Eliot uses to portray the sensitive nature that can be found in a male. By looking at the differences between Tom's inner deformity – his insensitive and harsh uncompromising nature and Philip's inner strength although he is physically deformed, we realize the greater versatility that can be found in the feminine elements of a person. Reva Strump on Movement and Vision in George Eliot's Novels (1959) illustrates Philip's 'birdlike features and easily ruffled feelings' (95) as a statement against masculinity. This would adhere to the fact that Maggie finds it easier to converse with Philip since there is no pride or male ego in him. Throughout the novel, Philip remains more of a feminine character devoid of machoism. This may be one of the reasons why Maggie is unable to accept Philip's marriage proposal since his feminine nature complimented her femininity and she could only love him in a sisterly manner. As she parted with Philip, 'Maggie smiled, with glistening tears, and then stooped her tall head to kiss the pale face that was full of pleading, timid love like a woman's' (788).

Unlike Maggie, Tom finds Philip to be 'a queer fellow. . . sulky as can be' (526). Tom believes that he can never be friends with Philip because he is not masculine enough. The narrator, however, feels that Tom cannot befriend Philip because of the 'old background of suspicion and dislike towards him as a queer fellow; a humpback and the son of a rogue' (532). Even in the final chapters of the novel, 'Tom and Philip never became friends' (532). The reason is simple. Members of society, such as Tom, could only divide men as masculine and women as feminine but

they could not perceive both elements as belonging in one person. Worse still, they could only rationalize people as good or bad. Maggie could find similarities in Philip since her intelligent and sensitive nature could explain that Philip 'couldn't choose his father' (526) whereas Tom couldn't. Maggie argues with Tom:

> 'I've read of very bad men who had good sons,
> as well as good parents who had bad children.
> and if Philip is good, I think we ought to be the
> more sorry for him because his father is not
> a good man'. (526)

Maggie could relate to Philip because he had 'a look of contented diligence that excited Maggie's curiosity' (527). Philip, too felt that Maggie's 'eyes were full of unsatisfied intelligence' (527). Together, they could have brought some fire into an almost sterile society if their relationship was not cut short by Tom.

Having failed to find her identity in Philip, Maggie experiments on a new relationship with Stephen. Holding Stephen's arm, she felt that she was 'being helped with firm tender care' (822). Stephen was 'a strong tonic' (822) and 'a stronger presence'(822) in Maggie's life. In Stephen, Maggie hoped to see a replacement for Tom's love. Stephen spoke in 'subdued tenderness' (822) whereas Tom could only speak in a harsh, unrelenting tone. Here, Maggie's moral superiority is clearly seen when she rejects Stephen for she knew that marrying Stephen would hurt Lucy.

Lucy represents the other extreme of femininity. Her doting, motherly role befits the gender role assigned to her. While Maggie stays in Lucy's home, Lucy comes in with an 'ample white dressing-gown' (569) and says, 'Why Maggie, you naughty child, haven't you begun to undress?' (569). Maggie also sees Lucy as 'a fairy godmother who can change someone from a drudge into a

princess' (570) ,that is, a surrogate mother figure. Maggie states, 'She always finds out what I want before I know it myself' (571). Yet, Eliot shows that what Lucy projects may after all be a false self. She resembles a falsely cheerful person hiding an empty, barren internal world that is masked by an air of independence and self-sufficiency.

Maggie's rivalry with Lucy goes back to the time when Mrs Tulliver rejects Maggie as unconventional and accepts Lucy and her perfect blonde curls as the ideal feminine child. If we read Eliot's biographies, Lucy is clearly the representative of Eliot's older sister, Chrissy just as Maggie and Tom are characters representing Marian and Isaac Evans. Chrissy was pretty and docile. She was the favourite of Mrs Evan whereas Marion was not. Eliot works out her jealously of her sister through Maggie who pushes Lucy into the mud when she sees that Tom preferred Lucy's company rather than hers. Maggie, too imagines herself to be a queen in a child's world where she can look and act as Lucy. But that vision is soon lost, when Maggie realizes that any kind of compromise would lessen her self worth and result in a loss of individuality. Maggie declares her wish to attack Lucy who is a symbol of the prejudice that blondes are more beautiful than dark-haired girls and 'avenge the dark, unhappy' (411) girl who always loses out to the blonde-haired heroine. Through the portrayal of Maggie and Lucy, the readers are given an opportunity to study the gap between the bourgeoisie angel-child, Lucy and the non-ideal middle-class child of the miller portrayed by Maggie. While Maggie is quite vociferous, Lucy's voice is rather subdued. Women have to not only be submissive to patriarchy but further submit themselves to perfection as portrayed by Lucy. There is the representation that Maggie represents the 'bad' girl and Lucy the 'good' girl. Poovey (1989) expresses the worry that such categorizing of females

would further threat feminine identity and females would be suppressed more based on this double identity.

The binary opposition between fair and dark is another form of 'feminine doubleness' (Auerbach, 1986, p. 131). It is a sign of both oppression and repression. In patriarchal societies, it is a necessary evil to create the notion that femininity as something that needs to be always controlled and always in need of control. Auerbach explains that the split within femininity forms stereotypical notions that the dark-skinned girl is evil and the fair-skinned girl is seen as virtuous. By typecasting Maggie as dark-skinned, Eliot helps to disperse the notion that skin colour has nothing to do with the thoughts and evil intentions of humans. One fine example that shows that colour does not discriminate except in the eyes of the prejudiced is the gypsy episode.

Maggie runs off to join the gypsies in her agitation as she understands her own painful place in the tradition where society favours fair girls. Maggie as a 'dark, unhappy one' (MF 499) with 'skin so brown' (499) is unlike Lucy - a blonde, fair skinned cousin, who seems to Mrs. Tulliver more like herself than her own daughter. When compared, Maggie looked like 'a rough, dark, overgrown puppy' (437) and Lucy was like 'a white kitten' (437). Maggie's status in her family is more of a foundling than a child. Maggie's mother cannot imagine how she had begotten Maggie for her child and her sisters think of Maggie as having come from the gypsies. Maggie's unconventionality and rebelliousness act as the physical and spiritual difference that separates her from her family and connects her to the gypsies.

The gypsies are dark-skinned and Maggie can relate to them as she is represented as rather ark for a Victorian child. Darkness is also emphasised when Maggie, after an outing with Lucy turns with 'blackened hand's' (MF 469). We read that Tom had tried to protect Lucy from being ampled by cows and Maggie, jealous of her brother's attention on Lucy, had pushed 'poor little nk-and white Lucy' (469) into the mud with her 'small brown arm' (469). Wanting to punish ucy, Maggie decides to coat her with cow-dung, thus making her as brown as her. However, her ge and jealousy are nor dispelled and fearing punishment she runs off to the gypsies hoping find refuge in 'gypsydom' (MF 471). At last, among the gypsies, Maggie is addressed as retty lady' (474) and she imagines herself to be a queen among the gypsies. In search of a aternal face, she glimpses at a dark-faced woman and accepts her 'as the gypsy-mother' (477). ne gypsy mother's face seemed to mirror precisely what she had been told ever so often by her nt. Maggie looks up to 'the new face . . . and was reassured by the thought that her aunt Pullet d the rest were right when they had called her a gypsy, for this face, with the bright dark eyes d the long her, was really something like what she used to see in the glass before she cut her ir off (473).

Maggie's experience at the gypsy camp was very short. Though the gypsies showed tenderness, aggie could not find a permanent identity with them. Old prejudices learnt from infancy come to unt Maggie and she begins to doubt the gypsies. The narrator states that though they 'were very pectful companions, amenable to instructions, she had begun to think that they meant perhaps to l her as soon as it was dark' (Mf 477). And since she realised that her identity did not lie away m home, she requested to be brought back home.

Though the gypsies cannot be Maggie's family, her failure to be the ideal feminine girl as her ther expects suggests that neither can Maggie wholly belong to the Tulliver family. The full nificance of the gypsy episode comes to play in Maggie's elopement with Stephen Guest when is nineteen. Once again, Maggie's unconscious jealousy makes her steal the affections of lousy makes her steal the affections of Lucy's fiance. As Philip Wakem had hinted earlier in ir childhood days that Maggie would 'avenge the dark women and carry all the love from sin Lucy' (MF 332). Maggie does exactly that. But, Maggie aborts her idea of eloping with phen and gives up her motives of revenge when she realizes that true discovery lies in the owledge of one's own sense of self-worth immaterial of its feminine or masculine nature.Maggie lises that though she will be outlawed by her brother for the very idea of elopement, she could l proud not to have fallen into self-gratification. Here, we admire Maggie who could connect the conventional and uninhibited femininity in her into an action into a noble and altruistic action. r altruistic nature is displayed once again when she tries to save her brother from the flood so t 'in death they were not divided' (784).

The rest of the chapter will concentrate on the re-making of identity without labels of ininity and masculinity. For Maggie, the need to make her family recognize her self -worth ardless of any binary opposition took centre stage in life. In Silas Marner, a child is truly ntified for its worth. By treating the child appropriately, the parent gives identity to the child d it then, brings identity to the provider. The father is a weaver. Weaving was an important ect in England before industrialization set in. Wordsworth in his poem Ruined Cottage, had used on the deterioration of a weaver and his weaving community due to materialism. Eliot

resurrects the activity of weaving in Silas Marner. Marner no longer weaves to hoard the gold he gains from such an activity but he weaves to support his new-found child, Eppie.

The image of weaving enhances the idea of interdependence. One is an old man and the other is 'a tramp's child' (SM 873). Both know only 'one face and one lap' (795) and they provide each other with love and attention. When these emotions are exchanged freely, the child and the child-carer survive in a healthy relationship. Each is able to get in contact with his and her own personal potentials for creativity in the right kind of environment. Eppie has 're-awakened his senses with her fresh life warming him into joy because *she* had joy' (878). Maggie in The Mill on the Floss grew up with no joy because of the frustrating environment she was in and dies an early death while Eppie survives childhood because of a nurturing environment. In such an environment there are no predestined labels of gender. Eliot hopes for a diffusion of any kind of tension caused by restrictive gender roles. She calls for the realization of the individuality in children with the creation of Eppie. In Silas Marner, Eliot debunks the Victorian myth of the ideal child based on masculine and feminine traits. Instead, she hopes that the adults could extend their vision through the eyes of a child and place their faith in the worthiness of that child.

This nurturing environment was not already present when Eppie arrived on the scene. The narrator explains that Marner's friend, William's 'rile act, supported by the drawing of lots, and the loss of his betrothed . . . drives Silas away from community' (SM 791) and that 'his trust in Man had been cruelly bruised" (793). Marner lived in 'a wilful self-exclusion' (791) before Eppie came into his life. Her appearance was in a form of a vision to Marner. And 'the vision – it only lit up more distinctly the little round form of the child. It was very much like his little sister. (866). And

Marner sees 'within that vision another vision . . . of far-off scenes . . . like old friendships . . . and that this child . . . stirred fibres . . . of old quiverings of tenderness' (867) in him. Eppie's arrival results in Marner being able to connect with himself and this causes him to be a good nurturer.

While Eliot attributes great importance to the role of the mother in the creation of the child's identity, she feels that it only takes a tender-hearted soul to be a good parent to enable the child to create its own identity. Thus, Eppie grows with no patriarchal laws of masculinity and femininity. She is allowed to grow and achieve a unique identity that helps in the 'metamorphosis' (790) of her 'mammy' (814). The narrator describes that 'a man whose life was so monotonous as a mariner's – who saw no new people and heard of no new events to keep alive in him the idea of the unexpected and the changeful' (814) was constantly kept busy by the demands of Eppie.

Earlier, Marner's weaving had further reduced his life 'to the unquestioning activity of a spinning insect' (SM 796). Before the coming of Eppie, Manner's life is described as 'narrowing and hardening' (799). His life had grown into a habitual life of hoarding his gold guineas which he regarded as 'his unborn children' (800). The narrator states:

> 'So year after year, Silas Marner had lived in
> this solitude, his guineas rising in the iron pot,
> and his life narrowing and hardening itself
> more and more into a mere pulsation of desire
> and satisfaction that had no relation to any other being.
> His life had reduced itself to the functions of
> weaving and hoarding, without any contemplation
> of an end towards which the functions ended' (799).

Marner's love for his guineas is described as such:

> He loved the guineas best, but he would not change the silver. The crowns and half-crowns that were his own earnings, begotten by his labour, he loved them all. He spread them out in heaps and bath'd his hands in them and set them up in regular piles, and felt their rounded outline between his thumb and fingers, and thought fondly of the guineas that were only half-earned by the work in his loom, as if they had been unborn children. (800)

If we are to compare Mrs. Tulliver to Silas Marner, we see that her love for material goods overshadowed her love for her husband and children. Mrs. Tulliver presents the idea of 'commodity worship' (Karl Marx 1967 p. 78) where items are regarded as valuable and hoarded, thus preventing access to children. Mrs. Tulliver sobs over her linen and china exclaiming that 'we're ruined . . . everything's going to be sold up' (MF 544) and these things that are such 'precious best things' and which are like her 'children' (545) are going to be all over the countryside. Maggie chides her mother for her materialism. Maggie 'burst out at last in an agitated, almost violent tone' (546):

> "Mother, how can you talk so? As if you only cared for things with *your* name on and not for what has my father's name too – and to care about anything but dear father himself! – when he's lying there, and may never speak to us again . . ." (MF 546)

While Mrs. Tulliver refuses to let go of her commodities, choosing them over her children and blaming her husband for bankruptcy, quite the reverse happens to Marner when he has to face with the parting of his gold coins. Before there is a chance of growth in Marner, Eliot forces him to let go of his gold coins. When Silas is robbed of his money, he gives 'a wild ringing scream, the cry of desolation' (SM 815). This cry is the primal scream of an abandoned man. The robbery had left him desolate for the second time. But when he sees Eppie and her golden curls, he decides that 'the

gold had turned into the child' (876). With that he accepts Eppie whole-heartedly. Gold is a precious element and Eliot has used the unique image of the female child as a precious metal, impenetrable and ancient, hence impervious to corruption.

Eliot also created Eppie out of a desire to experiment with Wordsworth's idea of the 'other-worldly' girl that he usually depicts in his poems. It is the image of the girl who undergoes no corruption even in the midst of adverse harshness. This child is perceived to be pure and those who connect with her will be renewed in their faith towards mankind and society at large. (Robson, Men in wonderland: The Lost Girlhood of the Victorian Gentlemen. p.30). Wordsworth borrows the idea of a child containing innate goodness from Rousseau who describes a child as a clean slate and who should be allowed to develop in its own fashion, untainted by the corruption and evilness of the world.

From the goodness of the child, changes can occur in society. Indeed, Marner forms a new identity after he claims Eppie for himself. Silas, in the initial chapter of Silas Marner is described as possessing an empty 'inward life' (790) - ' nothing that called out his love and fellowship toward strangers he came amongst; and the future was all dark, for there was no unseen love that cared for him' (791). For fifteen years, Silas lived outside the village of Raveloe, having nothing to do with his neighbours beyond the selling of the cloth that he weaved. In his alienation, the simple weaver is compared to a 'little child' (791) who has no love and shows no love. His cataleptic fits which made him look like a 'dead man come to life again' (799) further estranged him from the people around him.

Eppie is then introduced as a symbol of hope and continuity in an aging man as well as an aging community. It is interesting to note that the child figure, Eppie, is not brought up with stiff patriarchal tyranny. Instead, Silas is described as 'partly as handy as a woman' (SM 881) who does not completely possess masculine traits such as aggression and high-handedness. With the adoption of Eppie, Silas moves towards life and growth. The narrator explains that we detect some 'circulation of the sap before we detect the smallest sign of bud' (864) to signal the possibility of growth in Marner. Having lost his gold, Marner finds solace in his neighbours:

> This strangely novel situation of opening his trouble
> to his neighbours, of sitting in the warmth of a hearth
> not his own, and feeling the presence of faces and voices
> which were his nearest promise of help had doubtless its
> influence on Marner, in spite of his passionate
> preoccupation with his loss. (SM 865)

The promise of growth comes in the form of Eppie.

In the 'wide-gazing calm' (SM 871) of the child, the weaver could find rest. In contrast to Eppie's eyes, we remember Maggie's eyes to be 'full of unsatisfied intelligence, and unsatisfied, beseeching affection' (MF 527). Both Eppie and Maggie's eyes hold the hunger for knowledge and love. While the eyes of Maggie give the impression of a seeker who has never reached the sanctuary of rest, Eppie however is the symbol of haven. This haven is seen as a welcome for a man who had lived years of daily struggle within a life full of 'pure impulse' (SM 800). It is also a haven for the fulfillment of the child's longing for parental love. Eppie becomes the vehicle for the author to show the importance of love and attention. Under 'the perfect love' (SM 891) and 'almost inseparable companionship' (891) of father and daughter, the outcast child and the alienated man find a harmonious relationship. Eppie had been left in the snow by her mother and rejected by her

father. Her rescue by Silas, who turns his stone hut into a soft nest for Eppie, lined with downy patience' (SM 881) elevates her sense of worth and allows her to develop her identity. The harmonious relationship between Silas and Eppie continues until she marries Aaron. Aaron continues Eppie's duty and takes on the role of a protective son-in-law for Silas. When Eppie marries, she has one hand on 'her husband's arm' (SM 916) and 'with the other she clasped the hand of her father' (917).

The hand can be said to be a symbol of a guiding child. The story of Silas Marner begins with forward-seeking thoughts (SM Prologue). The hand provides a solution to a dead-end situation:

> In the old days there were
> angels who came and took
> men by the hand and
> led them away from the
> city of destruction. We see
> no white-winged angels now.
> but yet men are led away
> from threatening destruction:
> a hand is put into theirs;
> which leads them forth
> gently towards a calm and
> bright land, so that they look
> no more backwards; and the
> hand may be a little child's.
> (SM 882)

Salvation comes in the form of a child of about two years old with golden curls - a substitute for the money Silas had lost. Eppie is big enough to walk. But, she is too young to be independent and has to depend on Silas for protection. In Silas's care, Eppie loses the label of 'the tramp's child' (873) and becomes "the blessed angel (877).

This affectionate child had toddled to the open door of Silas's cottage and she was gurgling like a 'newly-hatched gosling beginning to find itself comfortable' (SM 867). Since a newly-hatched gosling is the most affectionate of all birds, ready to trust the first living creature it sees, Eliot uses this image in describing Eppie as ready for filial devotion. Her devotion to Marner is instrumental in leading Silas out his state of alienation. We read that 'as the child's mind was growing into knowledge, his mind was growing into memory' (878). He wonders if Eppie is 'his little sister whom he had carried about in his arms for a year before she died, when he was a small boy without shoes or stocking' (866). Thus, Eppie instantly helps Silas connect his present to his past.

The theme of extended vision is well-illustrated by the presence of Eppie. The child illuminates the world around her. Silas, in his maternal role, is always around for Eppie. He cares for her, tends to her needs and interrupts his weaving to play with her. He is portrayed as a genderless agent willing to provide for Eppie's needs. Eppie, in return, rescues Silas from a mechanical, insect-like life, to a rich and fulfilling existence. Marner feels alive as he tries to cater to the child's every demand since Eppie has made Silas a parent, the minute she called him 'Mammy'. (867) Silas in turn promises that Eppie will be 'well provided for' since, 'that was a father's duty. (883).

As Silas lulled the child to sleep, he could 'feel a certain awe' (872) in the presence of the little child. The narrator describes this awe as similar to 'some quiet majesty or beauty on the earth or sky - before a steady glowing planet, or a full-flowered eglantine, or the bending trees over a silent pathway' (872). Eppie's 'wide-open blue eyes' promised a bright future for Silas. The narrator relates that as Eppie grew, the love between Eppie and Silas grew too. The 'love between him and the child that blend them into one, and there was love between the child and the world-from men

and women with parental looks and tones, to the red lady-birds and the round pebbles' (881) and with this love, Silas could 'come to understand better what this life was' (881).

However, this extended vision does not cover Godfrey Cass. Having rejected Eppie when he first saw her, she becomes inaccessible to him. Having declared that 'the father would be much happier without owning that child' (SM 873), he loses the privilege in 'taking refuge in Eppie's little world' (878). Godfrey's inaccessibility to his own child shows that he was slower to realize Eppie's worth and it was Silas who benefits tremendously from his discovery.

Eppie manages to widen Silas' vision of himself and the community at large. Although the people of Raveloe were 'people of average culture and experience' (789) and 'who lived in careless abundance' (796), looking upon Marner with 'distrust' (797), they were transformed inwardly by Marner's adoption of Eppie. The narrator states that 'Nobody was jealous of the weaver for he was regarded as an exceptional person' (886). Any superstition that remained concerning him had taken an entirely new colour' (886) and some were of the opinion that' when a man had done what Silas had done with an orphan child' (887) he was a truly noble being. He had acted as no man would ever do. Thus, society obtains a vision of kindness and love in its treatment of Eppie.

This theme of extended vision grew out of George Eliot's need for a new vision that would give her some faith in mankind after the depiction of Maggie's painful state of alienation and death in The Mill on the Floss. Eliot's letters provide enough evidence that she was as sorrowful as the character Maggie during and after the writing of the novel The Mill on the Floss. She laboured for

months over her research for her new novel until she was inspired by 'a story of an old-fashioned village life, which has unfolded itself from the Merest Millet-seed of thought'. (Letters III p. 371). She used this childhood impression of a linen weaver to expand her vision and discover new meanings of self-worth and new relationships. The need to think through her childhood memories as a source for her latest writing proved even to Eliot that the past cannot be cut off entirely and that one needs the past to go forward to the future. Eliot then envisaged a child that could be uncorrupted and would be the ideal image for a person's salvation. She needed this child to be a source of endless joy as opposed to Tom and Maggie who could find no happiness in their childhood. Thus, the reason for the creation of Eppie.

Eliot's reasoning was that if the Tullivers' household did not recognize Maggie's worth then she would create another child and put it for adoption in the hands of a 'declining man' (SM Prologue) whom society had rejected. Her experiment was a success. Eliot completes her search for the key to 'a prosperous growth' (882) by introducing a child and a parent who are never at logger-heads with each other. Marner states:

> 'Since the time child was
> sent to me and I've come
> to love her as myself,
> I've had light enough to
> trusten by... I think
> I shall trusten till I die'.
> (SM 915)

This is what Eliot hopes all parents will say when they are given the responsibility to look after their children. The decision to use an outcast to undertake the most important job of caring for a child shows that drastic measures need to be taken by society to address the problems of poor

parenthood. Parents are to trust their children and allow them enough space to grow without stifling them with silly notions of masculinity and femininity.

The Mill on the Floss was an alarming self-confrontation for George Eliot who could not trust the society she lived in to give her due recognition for her way of life and the career she had embarked on. The society that she lived in still gave recognition to men for their talents. Since a novel can be regarded as a child, she calls out to the members of her society to respect a person's writing like their very own child and accept its worth regardless of age, sex or the looks of the writer. The simple weaver and the child, Eppie are vehicles for the author to express a new understanding of herself and society at large. When Eliot began writing The Mill on Floss, even her best friends did not know that Marian Evans Lewes was George Eliot - the pen name of a female author! However, readers came to know of her identity before the publication of Silas Marner. Although Eliot decided to continue using the male pseudonym after her identity was discovered, she realized that she must completely trust the readers to judge Silas Marner (and the author too) for its worth. Eliot's trust in her people paid off for her novels were well-received by a society that was very much conformed to a narrow view that female authors were good at writing only children's books! This restored Eliot's faith in her society.

Thus, Maggie and Eppie, both female figures deal with certain uncertainties in the author's life in her quest for self-identity. Both figures are the writer's conscientious endeavor to help us open our eyes to the conditions of the world around us and however appalling the situations may be, they help us to put our faith in ourselves, our families and the people around us.